



Taking care of you(rself)

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Summary:

Richie is a mess and Stan tries to fix him up.

Request: "I LOVE YOU! ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?!"

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“You’re such a pain, Richie.”

“Incorrect, Stan. I am in pain.” Richie chuckled weakly, but when he noticed sharp look that Stan send him, he quickly became silent.

Stan stood still, towering over Richie who was sitting on the verge of bathtub. He was scrutinizing him and trying not to let all of his worries flood out and paint all of his features. His eyes wandered from Richie’s dark hair all covered in dirt, to his eyes, hidden behind the glasses, and huge purple bruise forming under the left one, to his nose, covered in already dry blood. Richie was holding himself by his right elbow, making small massaging moves.

“You won’t ever learn, will you?” Stan finally said, rubbing his face with one hand and sighed. Richie didn’t respond, his eyes wandering all over Stan’s floor. Talking to Stan in moments like this was hard and it drove Richie crazy at some points. No matter what anyone would say, he always seemed to have a smart, witty answer, so engaging into a squabble with him, having no arguments on his side was like shooting himself in the foot.

“At least you should be glad that I found you today.” Stan said trying not to sound like an angry parent telling off his kid. Once again before his eyes appeared the sight of Richie sitting on the curb, barely breathing but laughing. Shiver went down Stan’s spine, he blinked few times trying focus again.

“Glad? Yes, I’m so fucking glad! Can’t you see how fucking glad I am?!” Richie almost screamed, earning warning look from Stan. His parents were downstairs, probably asleep and even though they wouldn’t mind Richie being here, especially looking the way he did, he didn’t want to wake them. He threw his first aid into the sink and turned his whole body to face the other boy.

“What do you mean?” he asked slowly, furrowing his eyebrows at the tone Richie used, painfully sarcastic but not in his usual way.

“What do I mean? I couldn’t be happier to get beaten up again and

stumble upon you so you can scold me like a little bitch!”

“Sco- scold? I haven’t even said anything, I-” Stan tried to bounce the ball back but was thrown off his guard by this accusation. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. “Whatever you think, I dragged you here to take care of you.”

“Yeah, because I can’t take care of myself alone, right?”

“I doubt you can.” Stan shot angrily, grabbing his left hand, ignoring the whine that escaped Richie’s mouth, and shoving his palm to his face. Richie didn’t want to look at it at first, knowing all too well what Stan is talking about. “Look at it.”

Stan’s voice was calmer now, quite cold but concerned. Air left his lungs when he moved his eyes to face it. There was an ugly scar laying shamelessly across his skin, grinning to him with sharp teeth; painful reminder of what happened 4 years ago at the Neibolt house. He didn’t want to look at it for too long but before he managed to move his head, the other hand appeared in his sight. There was a scar too, but it was smaller and smoother, almost unnoticeable if you didn’t know it was there.

The day they swore to come back if It has not died was kind of foggy in Stan’s memories but he was well aware that this happened. It was highly irresponsible to cut their skin with dirty piece of glass but fortunately nothing bad happened to, well, most of them. Stan got his wound cleared and fixed right when he came back home and he was sure everyone else have done the same. That was, until two days later when he noticed dirty bandage covering Richie’s left hand and visible painful grin on his face when he touched anything with it. He was surprised, he hadn’t expect his friend to be even more irresponsible. That day his parents went with him and Richie to the hospital to have it taken care of professionally since the wound has gone really bad.

Richie had been ashamed back then when they left the building of the hospital, and was ashamed here, sitting in Uris’ bathroom. He pulled out his hand from Stan’s grip and tried to hide it in his pocket looking anywhere but him.

"You asshole." Richie whispered after few minutes. "It always has to be the way you want it, right? In order. Clean and clear."

"Don't tell me that keeping your wounds clear is just my whim!"

"I don't know Stan, maybe it is!" Richie huffed "You just love perfection so much that I don't even know what am I still doing in your life! I'm this indelible stain you just keep trying to wash off, always correcting, always aiding with this patronizing look in your eyes, I'm so sick of this. I am not perfect and won't ever be so just, spare me and fuck off."

"It's not about perfection!" Stan couldn't believe what he has heard. Richie was talking about him like about machine that was set to obey certain rules.

"I love you! Are you happy now?!" Stan whisper-screamed, tears welling up his eyes. "It's never been about perfection. It's about your fucking health and your fucking well being. That's what I'm concerned about."

He panted, looking at Richie who seemed to be at the loss of words. *Such a rare sight* he thought to himself. He turned his back to Richie feeling his eyes were too heavy, couldn't hold tears anymore. He blinked few times, and wiped them quickly not wanting to completely break down. It hurt. It so fucking hurt, but at least Stan felt that his friend was honest with him and that was to be appreciated. He gulped, trying to swallow the huge knot that formed in his throat.

He moved to the sink, trying to gather all the supplies that he needed to finally fix Richie up. He was so focused on keeping control over his trembling hands that it took him a moment to notice that the silence between them was now broken with little sobs, followed by a thud. He turned around to see that Richie was now sitting on the floor, keeping his legs tightly to his chest and shaking uncontrollably. Stan felt his heart twitch painfully in his chest and in no moment he was sitting right next to the boy, his arms wrapped around him, careful not to hurt his hand more.

"I'm sorry- I'm so, so sorry-" Richie whispered and if Stan wasn't so

close he wouldn't hear him. "Shut up, Richie." Stan said softly, taking off his friend's glasses and placing them on the shelf. He let him rest his head on his chest, burying hand in dark locks. He felt his heart break into smaller and smaller pieces with every sob. "It's okay, you don't have to say anything. I shouldn't have said anything. Guess hanging out with you made my mouth trash as well."

He earned a small chuckle from the boy in his embrace, but it didn't calm him down, not even a bit. This whole evening, the sudden urge to go for a walk so late in the night, finding Richie all messed up in the middle of the empty street, so far away from his home and him acting just weird for the good ol' Trashmouth Tozier...it all raised so many questions Stan was too afraid to ask, although deep inside he felt he knew the answers and it made his guts twitch.

They've been sitting on the floor for god knows how long, when Richie spoke again, and when he did, Stan's heart sank.

"It's my father, you know." his voice was hoarse, he cleared his throat, and continued. "He came back yesterday. I don't even know what have I done wrong this time, all I remember is that he hit me twice and shoved me. Believe me or not, but I didn't even want to say anything. I've just run away, and I ran and ran and ran...and next thing I know is that you found me, I don't even remember what street was that."

Stan closed his eyes and let out a breath he had no idea he had been holding. He knew it. He felt the anger crawling up his guts and clutch his heart.

"You're staying here today." he just whispered after a moment, but they both knew he didn't have to. He just wanted to feel that he can do something at the time. He placed soft kiss on the top of his head and slowly untangling them he got up. "I'll bring you towels and some clothes to wear. You can clean yourself. I- I believe you can take care of yourself, Richie."

Stan sat on his bed dressed up in his pajamas, waiting for Richie to leave the bathroom. He was looking at no particular thing on the wall, hugging himself with one arm and chewing on thumb of the other hand. He still was worried. He was worried that in the morning

he won't be able to stop Richie from leaving, he was worried that his friend has to come back to the place he has this misfortune of calling his home, he was worried that next time (*oh God, please don't let next time happen, oh please*) he won't find him.

The door to Stan's room opened and Richie came in. He still looked miserable but seemed relaxed now. He closed the door behind him and sat next to Stan.

"Where do I—"

"Here, with me." Stan cut in, sending him reassuring smile. He moved his hand, almost unconsciously, wanting to move Richie's hair from his face and touch his bruised cheek, but he stopped halfway through. Richie licked his lips eyeing Stan, his hand now hung in the air and Stan again. He caught his friend's wrist and awkwardly placed his palm on his cheek, leaning a bit to the touch.

Stan felt his mouth dry out, his heart running mile per second. He wanted to say a lot of things that have been weighing his heart since he can remember, but all he managed to do was to caress Richie's face gently and press a kiss to his forehead.

When they finally settled down under the covers, Stan was laying on his side, facing Richie's back. He was worried for whatever the next day may bring, but at least right then and there Richie was here, all safe and good. That had to be enough.

Stan sighed and rolled over. His eyelids felt heavy but other than that he couldn't think about sleeping that night. He heard the mattress shifting behind him, the other boy moving closer to him. Skinny arm made its way under the blanket and rested on his waist, Richie's head was now pressed to the back of Stan's neck. He let out shaky breath.

"Hey Stan?"

"Yeah?"

"I am happy. You know- that you love me."

"Go to sleep, Richie." Stan whispered, closing his eyes and catching Richie's hand, intertwining their fingers together.

Author's Note:

uhh so that's first ever Stozier fic I've worked on (I started writing it about a month ago? Maybe less idk) and I'm actually kind of proud with how it turned out? The only thing I'm unsure about is the title but ㄟ(ゝ)/